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CHARLIE ROSE: The climax of the U.N.'s Decade for Women. Next week more than ten thousand women will meet in Africa to assess female progress. Under the U.N. banner, the delegates will also look at ways of making further advances for Third World women, as well as those in Western democracies.

Maureen Reagan heads the official United States delegation, and she joins us now to talk about it.

First of all, how'd you get to be chairman of the U.N. delegation?

MAUREEN REAGAN: Well, you might discuss that. Well, I'm not sure whether the President asked the Secretary of State where he could think of that would be the farthest place to send me this summer. I'm just lucky, I guess. Jeane Kirkpatrick had a lot to do with it, and Nancy...

ROSE: She wanted you, then, as chair...

REAGAN: And Nancy Reynolds, who is our commissioner...

ROSE: And she's the deputy chair, is she not, Nancy Reynolds?

REAGAN: Yes. Uh-huh.

ROSE: ...one of the delegates.

REAGAN: Yes. She's our representative to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.

And so the two of them sort of engineered this.

ROSE: Let's send a Reagan as chairman of our delegation.

So what's going to happen in Nairobi? What's the purpose of this? Why do we need to have a whole group of people come together to assess the decade?

REAGAN: I think what we have to do is look at a little bit of the history of this. Back in the early '70s, the United Nations began a series of world conferences on a variety of economic and social issues. And women was one of those issues.

In 1975 there was a world conference in Mexico City. After that, in 1976, the United Nations declared 1976 to 1985 as the Decade of Women, not just the Year of Women, but the Decade of Women. And so they decided to have a world conference in Copenhagen in the middle of that, in 1980. And this is the end of that decade, and so it was decided to have a third world conference.

It's an ongoing process of the United Nations system, and I think that's what a lot of people don't understand. They think that, somehow, this just sort of came out of the blue. It isn't. It is a part of the United Nations system. And so all of the problems that we face in the United Nations system, we face within this conference.

And it goes on like this: We are supposed to be discussing the unique problems of women, participation by women in government and in industry, exchanging ideas about how we can better present ourselves and the things that we care about.

ROSE: And bring in the own experiences of each of the people representing the different parts of the world, whether it's Europe or Asia, Third World.

REAGAN: I do think one thing. I do think that in the plenary session in Nairobi the position and the participation of women representing most of the 158 countries, their positions within their own governments will speak very well for the decade. Countries that were represented by men in Mexico City now have women ministers, have women within their Foreign Ministry and other positions...

ROSE: Are there going to be men there as delegates? You have one man going over from the United States.

REAGAN: Yes, we have.

ROSE: Your token man.

REAGAN: We have our token man. Yes.

I asked Alan Keith -- he is our Ambassador at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations -- if he would want to be the only man on the delegation and whether he...

ROSE: He said, "What a trip! I love it!"

REAGAN: ...would want to be an adviser. And he said, "I wouldn't miss this."

[Laughter]

REAGAN: But he's terrific. He and I have really worked out a kind of togetherness through this whole preparatory five months leading up to this conference. We've been in Vienna at the preparatory meeting. We spent a month in New York at the Economic and Social Council. And so we sort of work together. It's great.

ROSE: I'm sure he'll have a good time.

The question that ought to be asked -- and I know you have asked it, and other people have asked it of you -- and so you have people together, as they do at the U.N., and you in fact debate and you raise consciousness and you understand that progress that's been made, and some of the problems; and you understand the health and the social and the economic difficulties that women have, and some of the advancements. And you come away with enthusiasm.

What else? Does it have any binding enforcement? Is there any way to make sure that what comes out of this convocation, this group of people will make any difference anywhere?

REAGAN: No. And that's one of the problems of it.

I think that, also, we also have to realize that because of the inclusion of Zionism-is-racism in Mexico City and some very radical Palestinian language in Copenhagen, we are actually not a part of any of the forward documents that have come so far. And so we've worked very hard, and continue to work, on the rules of procedure to try to get the forward-looking strategies, which is our future document, from this conference by consensus.

And to us, consensus means that if there is an issue on which we have some basic disagreements, we will continue to discuss it until we find language that is acceptable to all of the groups within the United Nations system, so that we really have a world plan for women for the next 15 years.

ROSE: A world plan for women?

REAGAN: Yes. Things that can be done, things that should be done. Calling for increased participation by women...

ROSE: In the political process.

REAGAN: In the political process. And these are governmental functions, by and large. Increased awareness of health care needs. The needs -- the particular needs of women refugees, for instance, where in some parts of the world, because of their own cultural backgrounds, they are denied health and food benefits because only men can sign up for those. Well, if they're refugees, we should be looking at how we can take care of those women, and not just try to prolong this kind of system.

The problem in Southeast Asia. Women who come out of Vietnam on the boats, about 80 percent of them, by the time they reach the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, wherever, have been raped and otherwise abused by pirates in the South China Sea. Now, that, for us, is a particular issue, first of all, because we are very interested, and we've taken over 900,000 refugees in the last ten years into the United States. More important than that, there's something we can do about it. We can insist that there be more women in those camps. We can give support to the Thai Navy to stop that piracy. Those are things we can do.

ROSE: You can do by what, by simply saying...

REAGAN: Our government can do. These are things that we can...

ROSE: So if you get a good idea that comes out of the convention, out of the session...

REAGAN: ...we have to come back and work on it bilaterally.

ROSE: You can come back and then say...

REAGAN: But what we have to do in this conference is we have to define what are our successes and failures. And to me, defining our successes and failures is looking for those relationships that will bring us information in the future and allow us to continue to...

ROSE: How do you avoid this becoming a kind of political -- each delegation reflecting certain political points of view and engaging in those kinds of political discussions that you're saying you want to avoid, whether it's Israel and Zionism, or the PLO and a homeland, and all issues which affect men and

alike, but is the kind of thing that you seem to be saying you don't want on the agenda? What are you going to do?

REAGAN: Well, we can't avoid them. That's the whole point.

And so our position is, there is nothing we will not discuss. But we will discuss it in the context of its unique concern to women, and not try in this 14 days of this conference to arrive at conclusions that have escaped all of the world bodies, including the Security Council and the General Assembly. We are not going to solve apartheid. We are not going to solve the Palestinian issue. We are not going to solve Afghanistan.

ROSE: But all will come up.

REAGAN: But we -- oh, of course it will come up. We'd be naive to think it wouldn't come up. But if we can focus the attention on to what the unique problems of women are, then there may be some things that we can do that will not solve the overall problem -- and we would be stupid to think that we could do that. And what I think has been happening all along, and where I'm very worried that we don't understand exactly what the system is doing, is that there is a perception in parts of the world that women are stupid and that women are naive and that they can be put into a position of taking positions for their governments in this forum that their government will not take any place else, and therefore changing radically some kind of foreign policy.

We are not stupid and we are not naive, and this conference should not be used for that.

ROSE: When we come back we'll talk about who's going to be there and more about the U.N.'s Conference on Women, 1985, looking back over ten years at the Decade of Women.

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REAGAN: ...Nations basically pays for the conference, which means that we pay a good part of that bill.

ROSE: Yeah, that's right. We're the primary contributor to the U.N.

REAGAN: We're also the primary contributor to the voluntary fund, which underwrites the non-governmental forum, the organizational forum which takes place synonymous with this. Then the governments pay for their own delegations.

But in our case, we wanted to make sure that we involved the private sector as well, so we raised almost \$50,000 in

private money. And with that money we were able to bring our delegation to Washington for a three-day weekend in May, for a training and briefing weekend by the State Department so we would be totally up to date on the U.N. system, as well as on the international issues.

ROSE: So you've had your delegates meeting with the Senate and at the State Department and at Justice to understand how our government is dealing with some of these issues, and familiarizing themselves with the status of women...

REAGAN: Exactly. Yes.

ROSE: ...in the United States Government.

The criticism, as you know, has to do with the selection of some of the delegates. People are saying, "Where is Gloria Steinem, and where are certain feminists who've been part of previous conferences, and how did they select those people?" Because there are a lot of -- Lindy Boggs, the Congresswoman from Louisiana, who's a Democrat, is going.

REAGAN: Yes. There are quite a few Democrats on...

ROSE: But they're asking, where are those feminists? Why not have the broad spectrum of viewpoints...?

REAGAN: Well, as a matter of fact, Bella Abzug and Betty Friedan are both attending the NGO forum.

ROSE: But that's different.

REAGAN: Well, it's not different. They go on at the same time.

Neither of them were on the delegation in 1980.

We have Margaret Heckler, who was in Mexico City, is on our delegation. Virginia Allen, who was in both Mexico City and Copenhagen, is on our delegation. Mary Greef (?), who was in Copenhagen, is on our delegation. And then we have a lot of people who have participated in the last five years in the preparatory process, and a lot of people who haven't involved, so that we have for what goes on in the future people who have now been a part of the international process.

This is not a looking-back. This is a looking-forward.

ROSE: Okay. But I mean what about the full spectrum, though, of feminist view in America? You proudly say you are a feminist, you have said for many years, and you deserve to be called a feminist.

REAGAN: So are a lot of other people on the delegation.

ROSE: But you know what I mean. There are people who feel you didn't reach out to some people.

Where is Judy Goldsmith, the President of NOW?

REAGAN: I have no idea where Judy Goldsmith is. Where is Judy Goldsmith? I have no idea.

But I don't think that's the point.

ROSE: Well, that is the point. I mean the feminists -- that's a point for feminists. Some feminists are saying, "Why aren't we included? We're Americans. We're women. We're feminists."

REAGAN: We started with 2000 names of people who asked to be on the delegation, who were recommended to be on the delegation. We have certain governmental people that have to be there. There are certain categories of people, including members of Congress and others, that you want to have included, elected officials from some of the states.

We had 35 that we could deal with out of all of that. Out of that 35, I think there are about eight that you would consider to be elective. And we tried to get as wide a geographic mix, as well, as we could.

I think we have an excellent delegation. And I do not apologize for -- except for the fact that we can't take more than 35. There aren't any rooms. And those who are attending...

ROSE: There's no room at the inn in Nairobi?

REAGAN: As a matter of fact, what we have done -- I will tell you what this delegation has done. We have contacted our embassy and found rooms in homes of Americans in Nairobi for some of our NGOs who are going there because there are so few hotel rooms in Nairobi. And so we've done everything we can to make everybody as much a part of this as we possibly can.

ROSE: What about Jeane Kirkpatrick? Is she coming?

REAGAN: Jeane Kirkpatrick is going to be in France. She has an academic meeting, as well, that was planned some months ago. We talked about this back in January. And her position with us, with me was she wanted very much to be a part of the delegation, she was there at our training weekend, and if we need her she will fly down. But if we don't need her, she thinks that we can adequately take care of it by ourselves.

ROSE: What about Senator Kassebaum?

REAGAN: We always knew from the beginning that the members of Congress were going to have a very serious problem with this because it's the last two weeks of the summer session. And so Senator Kassebaum and Congresswoman Holt and Congresswoman Boggs have taken the position that they are elected officials first and members of the delegation second.

I know that Congresswoman Boggs is coming later in the conference. I'm not sure about the other two.

ROSE: My last question. Your fondest dreams. You go over there and it's terrific. What do you hope happens? What would be a very successful conference?

REAGAN: A very successful conference. Well, two things. By defining our own successes, a very successful conference, to me, will be that we will have women come back who have established personal relationships with women in other parts of the world, so that we can continue to update our own bilateral information of what women need and what they are achieving, so that we can help develop policy in this country. That is our success and that's a success that we will go for.

The success of the conference, which is a little bit more iffy, would be if we can come up with a forward-looking strategies document by a general agreement that really defines the best agreement of women of the world, and not the five or six paragraphs that might divide us. That would be a successful conference.

ROSE: When you come back from Nairobi, are you going to come here and give us a report on what happened?

REAGAN: I promise.

ROSE: Maureen Reagan, it's always good to see you.